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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Al-khoei Foundation, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[14 August 2018]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Al-Khoei Foundation written statement to the Human Rights Council's 39th Session, September 2018

Al-Khoei Foundation is an international charitable organization which has been in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council since 1998. The Foundation strives to promote the values of equality, tolerance, respect and justice for all groups and minorities worldwide, and actively supports all initiatives that foster peaceful co-existence and friendship between different religious and non-religious groups. We work at the local, national and international levels for the education and welfare of the Muslim community with a focus to promote the empowerment of women, children and youth. The Foundation also works to improve and highlight issues that pose a severe threat to human rights with the help of our network of activists and community workers.

Our statement is focused on the violations and human right abuses against children. According to a report by the global charity, approximately 357 million children are present in conflict areas and are prone to violence, abuse and death. It is distressing to see that children are being targeted and affected by the conflicts and as a result, the world has become a more dangerous place for children. We can see that schools, tuition centres, hospitals, recreational spots are specifically being targeted. Children are being used as human shields, as suicide bombers, they are the victims of sexual abuse and torture; they are the refugees who lose their parents, homes and their lives. Children are being enslaved, detained, being given drugs. Tragically, children are more at risk now than ever before.

Al-Khoei Foundation has been highlighting the war crimes and the violations of international human rights, specifically against the children and women.

Children in Yemen

Thursday 9th August proved a horrific day as a bus of children, ages between 6 to 11 returning from a picnic, was hit because of a Saudi lead coalition attack that took lives of 51 human beings including 40 children. The day when the small coffins were brought together for the collective farewell prayer was the most tragic day for Yemen. "There was body parts and blood everywhere", said a young survivor. This was not the first attack that targeted the children directly. According to reports and multiple sources, at least 19 schools and five hospitals were attacked in the same military actions.

Children in Afghanistan

According to a UNICEF report, around 3.7 million aged between 7 and 17 years old are out of school and 2.1 million aged between 6 and 14 are the victims of child labour, in Afghanistan. Afghani children have been suffering for four decades now.

The year 2018 proved the most catastrophic. There was an attack during the Nawruz celebration where a Shia mosque was bombed, attacks in Herat, airstrikes on a madrassah that resulted in 30 deaths of Children, attacks on schools and a very recent suicide attack on a tuition centre in Kabul that killed 48 students and injured 67 students. These events show how hard life in Afghanistan is for the people in general and especially for the children. "It was horrific and many of the students were torn to pieces", as stated by an eye witness of the blast. So many children are detained and are abused, sexually tortured and mistreated. Children are also suffering heavily because of the policies imposed on them by the elders.

Children in Rohingya

60% of the 50000 Rohingyas in Bangladesh are children and the majority living in refugee camps are under 18. According to a report by Save the Children, 48000 babies are expected to be born in already overcrowded refugee camps in Bangladesh. These children have seen the barbaric crimes, have suffered the brutality, violence, abuse, have seen their family members killed and their homes burnt, are now living in a state of extreme fear. A 12-year-old boy explains; "we live a captive life here. There is not enough space for us to play. We cannot do anything we want to do." The camps are not safe for the children, the girls face harassment inside the camps, and the boys have reported abuses and violence against them by the local men as well as the thieves and wild animals. Incidents of child trafficking have also surfaced, and it is also a major concern for the children and their guardians.

Children in Iraq

During the war, many people had to leave their homes and hometowns due to the fear of persecution at the hands of ISIS. As a result, hundreds of thousands of people had faced internal displacement. Although ISIS has been defeated in Iraq, the humanitarian disaster the country faces is huge. Today's Iraq faces the worst humanitarian crises and the most affected are children.

The children suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; have malnutrition and the lack of health facilities doubles the risk of death. "Both living under Isis and during the coalition offensive, these children have experienced things no child should have to. They have extreme emotional as well as physical scars," according to Save the Children's Mr Bhatnagar. Due to the lack of international aid and how Iraq crises is ignored by the media, the children are forced to live under extreme poverty. The children are often orphans or have to care for parents who have severe diseases. For this reason, they have no means of education and health and so suffer from malnutrition. Furthermore, as a result of these circumstances children are not free to enjoy themselves and must work to support their families and so child labour is increasing. It is reported that the ISIS fighters have not completely disappeared, which indicates that the children may continue to face abuse and violence.

Al-Khoei Foundation's initiative for widows and orphans, 'Al-Kawthar project' has been trying to support the victims of war and working on ground to providing short-term relief to fulfil the immediate needs of the families. This includes medical care, food supplies, clothes and other items, as well as long term assistance by providing funding for education for orphans and micro-finance for widows to empower them. Al-Kawther also offers scholarships schemes that allow individuals to sponsor orphans.

Al-Khoei Foundation appeal to the UNHRC and the international community is to take necessary actions to improve the living conditions for the children, so they are able to live in a fear free environment with the basic safety and necessities, that include health and education. The world needs to take measures that stop and prevent violations against children.